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Application No. 10/591,198

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) Water soluble salt cores manufactured by compacting a mixture of water soluble salts and binder under pressure and by subsequently subjecting said compacted mixture to a thermal treatment,

~~characterized in that~~ wherein the binder is an inorganic phosphate or a mixture of inorganic phosphates, the binder being with a fraction of between 0.5 and 10 by wt. % of said mixture of water soluble salts and the binder, the mixture further comprising and between approximately 1 and 10% by weight of a parting agent comprising graphite,

wherein the mixture of the water soluble salts and the binder are compacted and subsequently sintered and compressed at approximately 200 degrees C, and

wherein the compacted and sintered mixture and heating of the salt cores is not subjected to outgassing under a temperature of 700 degrees C during a heating process in the subsequent thermal treatment is to a temperature under 700 degrees C without being subjected to outgassing.

2. (Original) The water soluble salt cores as set forth in claim 1, characterized in that the binder contains a fraction of an inorganic borate.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The water soluble salt cores as set forth in claim 1,

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characterized in that the inorganic phosphate is a monoaluminium phosphate.

5. (Previously Presented) The water soluble salt cores as set forth in claim 1, characterized in that the inorganic phosphate is a boron phosphate.

6. (Previously Presented) The water soluble salt cores as set forth in claim 1, characterized in that the inorganic phosphate is a sodium polyphosphate

7. (Previously Presented) The water soluble salt cores as set forth in claim 1, characterized in that thermal treatment occurs at temperatures of less than 730 ° C.

8. (New) A method for producing a water soluble salt core for castings, the method comprising:

providing water soluble salts;

mixing the water soluble salts with a binder and a parting agent to create a mixture, the binder being an inorganic phosphate or a mixture of inorganic phosphates, the binder comprising at least one of a monoaluminium phosphate, a boron phosphate, or a sodium polyphosphate, wherein the binder has a weight of between approximately 0.5 and 10% of a total weight of the mixture, wherein the parting agent has a weight between approximately 1 and 10% of the total weight of the mixture, and wherein the parting agent comprises graphite;

compacting the mixture; and

sintering the mixture at approximately 200 degrees Celsius, wherein the mixture

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is not subjected to outgassing at a temperature below 700 degrees Celsius during a heating process in a subsequent thermal treatment.